

Extracts from the narrative of Mr Hugh Brown of Richmond formerly headmaster, 1937 to 1947, of Richmond Primary School.

After service in the N.Z. artillery in Belgium in the First World War, Mr Brown taught at several schools in Southland and Otago and went to Otago University, continued teaching with several appointments and his appointment as principal of the Richmond school, broken only by service during the Second World War in Tonga.

After retirement in 1947 Mr Brown held relieving and temporary teaching positions for a number of years in Nelson. Mr Hugh Brown is still very active. He is the father of Councillor Morrie Brown.

This narrative was tape-recorded on 16th December 1983 by Les Slater for the Richmond Borough Council. Typed by Louise Charters.

"In 1937 or '38 the architect came to ask me where the new school should go. I said there was only one position. It's a fairly calm sort of place, but your most persistent wind is your south wind. What we call the Spouter. Perhaps I should say that the most regular wind in the summer months is the sea breeze.

School

'Spouter'

Well people wanted it put on Oxford Street, right along there as it runs right up against the street. In those days the roads weren't sealed. My theory was that with the sea breeze blowing, cars going up and down that road, you'd have a dust problem in the school. It was supposed to be an open-air school, and the doors were supposed to be open. You could open up the whole side of the thing. The first in Nelson.

I brought all of these things out; there's going to be dust blowing into the school - that's going to be a confounded nuisance; there's going to be a traffic noise all day long. Cars weren't so plentiful then, but there's still plenty would go past.

And fortunately old * said 'I agree with you, that's the place to put it, on the back of the section.' Another thing was - that I forgot to mention - that you could look from Oxford Street across a green paddock, the playground, and we had the playground so clean that we used to hold

* He wanted

the district sports there, the district athletic meeting. Always held there instead of Trafalgar Park. We held it there because it was our school grounds. And we could get a straight hundred yards. And of course we were all very keen. It was a very keen sports association at the time.

sports

So that was how the new school came to be built, back against that road. And I think the Borough Council did make a slight concession about how close we could come to the road, so as to give us all the room in the front of the school we could get.

Council

Apart from that we were back towards the most strong wind, the Spouter from the south. So that meant the playground was sheltered to a great extent because the building went the full length of the section.

The day they photographed the school, for the Jubilee in 1937 I think it was, but anyway it wasn't very old at the time, they had to put artificial clouds in to make the picture look a bit better.

This school has a very very good scholastic record. Speaking for my own self, in the time I was there, we sent on several people who were eventually university scholarship students.

We had the Helen McMillan Brown one year; we got the prize for the best essay - it's in my drawer over there - on the Wellington Exhibition, from the whole of the Nelson Education Board area. And we got the Barnicoat Essay (prize) twice in the 10 years I was there; one of them was a Papps, and my own daughter was one of them as it happened. She wrote on Smuts. It was supposed to be an essay on a person who'd done the most good such and such, and so and so. As a matter of fact I suggested it to her. She said 'What can I write on Dad?' I said 'well if I was to make the choice, the one you hear most of on the air today and around about, is Jan Smuts. There's no doubt he did quite a lot for South Africa. He didn't get rid of apartheid and all that thing which is a separate question, but his movement towards progress in South Africa was enormous.

prizes

I had a kid I was teaching in intermediate at one time, relieving - I did a lot of relieving after I retired. And I said to the kid one day - of course we were always having these little jokes at school - 'It's alright son, I didn't come down in the last shower of rain. I waved the flag at the relief of Lady Smith, Boer War.' The next day the kid said to me in all seriousness, 'Dad says that if you waved the flag at the relief of Ladysmith, you did it in napkins!'

Boer war

And I didn't say to him at the time - which I should have - and I'll tell you another thing about the Boer War, a piece of poetry

I learnt that poem when I was a kid. I've forgotten the rest of it. It came out of School Mates, a monthly paper. I remember waving a flag ~~at~~ the news of the relief of Ladysmith. Marching in the procession with all the rest of them in Mataura. They burned Kruger in effigy in the flat top lorry they used to cart the stuff from the railway station in. They had a wax effigy of Kruger.

Around when I started teaching there were a lot of kids with Boer War names. They were about 12 or 13 years then, and the Baden-Powell this, and so on and so forth and that poem was a take-off of all those names."